

North Witney

a sustainable community



Delivering a high quality
residential development
for Witney

December 2009

Introduction

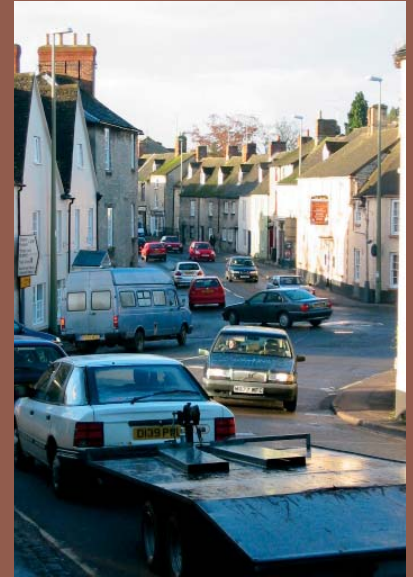
The North Witney Consortium (comprising Taylor Wimpey, Jack Moody Developments Ltd, Cranbrook Construction & Gleeson Homes) has been promoting land at North Witney for development for over 10 years. North Witney is, in our opinion, an appropriate location for delivering a high quality residential development for Witney and offers unrivalled potential to deliver real tangible benefits to the town as well as delivering much needed housing to meet the local need.

Witney town centre has successfully attracted considerable investment including new shops, leisure facilities and associated residential development, however the challenges facing the town have become more pronounced.

These challenges are:

Congestion within Witney town centre arising from the pressure of vehicular traffic on the single river crossing continues to be a major problem. Roads become gridlocked and this leads to an increase in problems of air quality in the town centre, which impacts upon the amenity of residents.

The floods of July 2007 caused significant disruption and damage within the town centre and on Hailey Road. Climate change seems to be exacerbating episodes of high rainfall and there remains real potential for further flooding, unless measures are introduced to mitigate the risk.



North Witney

The Consortium strongly advocates development at North Witney in a properly planned way that will **deliver infrastructure improvements to the benefit of the town**; an attribute that is unrivalled by any other development option for growth at Witney.

This briefing note has been prepared in order to summarise the proposals for land at North Witney and to outline the ways in which the development of the site could assist in resolving some of the problems that Witney currently faces.

*Development at North Witney offers unrivalled potential
to deliver real tangible benefits to the town*

Aerial photo with site redline boundary and Ordinance Survey data



Site Vision

Having undertaken extensive assessments of the development opportunities for the land at North Witney, our vision for the development of the site includes the following:

- **To create a connected community as a sustainable urban extension to the town.** The new neighbourhood could accommodate around 1,400 dwellings. These would be delivered in a flexible manner, responding to the housing needs of the town.
- Provide sports pitches accessible to both the existing and new community of North Witney;
- Opportunity to deliver West End Link Road and provide public transport improvements/priority;
- Provide primary school education and local retail and community facilities to serve existing and new residents;
- Create easily accessible public routes through the development to the countryside, and infrastructure by creating ecological corridors linking the existing habitats within the site to improve the wider countryside;
- Integrate with the settlement through linking into existing footpaths and roads, as well as providing community facilities easily accessible to new and existing residents;
- Improve access to town centre and improve self-containment of the settlement;
- Consolidate the urban edge of North Witney through the creation of an attractive wooded setting, common to West Oxfordshire towns; and
- Create a sustainable urban drainage system (SUDs) which will ensure that the surface water generated from the site is controlled to mitigate any impact from the development and reduce the risk of flooding downstream.





Enhanced central paddock area to provide a spine of green space to include potential attenuation features and leisure activity spaces.

Additional planting to create woodland edge

Street within the site following contour lines, main street to accommodate bus route.

Existing public footpaths running through the site retained and connected with new links.

Vehicular entrance point from New Yatt Road.

Vehicular entrance point from Woodstock Road (A4095).

New Primary School (2 form entry) on 2.5Ha with community facilities

Kings School building with sport pitches relocated.

Open Space with 360° views to Witney and open countryside beyond

Transport Opportunities

The development of land at North Witney creates a unique opportunity to provide a range of measures for transport improvements to complement the existing infrastructure of Witney. The proposed development provides significant opportunities to improve: provision of walking, cycling, public transport and highway management schemes.

The Witney Transport Study demonstrates that if the Cogges Link road were to be built, 1,000 houses could be delivered at North Witney, without any further major highways works. If both Cogges Link and the West End Link were to be delivered the full capacity of the North Witney site (1,400 dwellings) could be delivered. If only the West End Link were to be delivered, 900-1,200 houses could be developed at North Witney. However the West End Link would not only act to enable the development of land at North Witney but would also provide significant wider transport and environmental benefits to the town.

The transport strategy proposed as part of the North Witney proposals includes opportunities to create significant improvements to transport movements within Witney through the enhancement of the Bridge Street area in association with the Cogges Link Road and/or the delivery of the West End Link.

The North Witney Consortium controls the majority of land required to deliver the West End Link, the residual could be delivered via negotiation with the minority land owner.

As part of the development of North Witney, **the Consortium is committed to delivering the West End Link**, by providing the necessary land and financial contribution for its construction.

In addition, other transport improvements would be provided as part of the development proposals, including:

- High quality pedestrian links and crossing points to improve safety and the general environment for people walking or waiting for bus services;
- Direct cycle links to improve safety and accessibility;
- Bus priority at the existing (Bridge Street) or proposed (West End Link) river crossing to improve bus reliability and journey times through Witney;



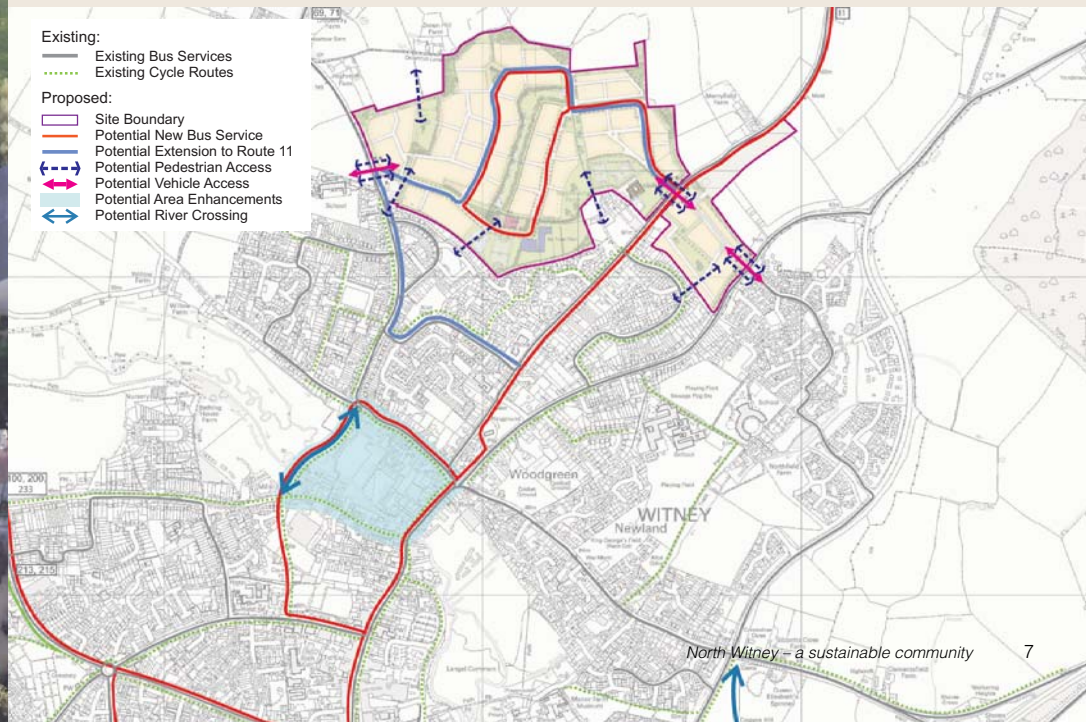


- Management and/or simplification of highway junctions to improve operation and safety; and
- An alternative river crossing in the town centre to be used in the event of flooding.

A Bridge Street enhancement scheme would offer improved walking, cycling and public transport connections to the existing residents, employees and visitors of Witney. It would act to improve reliability and journey times of bus services travelling through and within Witney, as well as freeing up highway capacity for other vehicles in the town. We believe that these proposals have real potential to improve the environment of Witney town centre and create significant benefits to the town as a whole.

There is also the potential that the development of land at North Witney could incorporate a Park & Ride to serve commuters to Oxford as well as those wishing to work or shop in the town.

In summary development at North Witney would deliver key infrastructure improvements which will assist the Council in meeting some of its core strategic objectives.



Flooding

The North Witney Consortium recognise that flooding is a key issue within Witney and that any development within the town needs to ensure that it does not exacerbate the current situation, but also where possible it should improve the situation. In particular development should be favoured which could assist in helping to mitigate the causes of the 2007 floods, which impacted upon the Town. Although there have been concerns relating to flooding of the North Witney site, less than 2% of the overall site area lies within the floodplain identified by the Environment Agency.

We recognise that the measures to control surface water run-off from the new development must be designed to prevent all flooding problems either within the site or down stream. Studies our professional drainage engineers have undertaken demonstrate that this can be achieved by the construction of 'balancing ponds' up stream, that store water when it rains and then release it at a controlled rate over the following hours and days. These can be blended with proposed Public Open Space uses to create attractive landscape areas.

This approach also offers the opportunity to significantly reduce the flooding problems seen on Hailey Road and further afield. The balancing ponds would be located upstream of Hailey Road and be designed to prevent the surcharges of water downstream at Hailey Road. The inclusion of such measures within the development proposals has the **potential to reduce the risk of flooding and safeguard the homes and livelihoods of many living in Witney** – something none of the other competing development sites can offer.





Landscape

Historically, Witney is a valley settlement. North Witney site lies close to the historic core of the town and on the side of slopes of a river valley, reflecting the historic development of the town.

The North Witney site relates well to the historic development of the town, in contrast with the rival sites which are located at the periphery of the town often on more elevated land.

The North Witney site has much greater visual containment than much of the land on the outskirts of the town. A major ridge lies to the north and east of the town. Development within these ridge lines would face inwards towards the town centre and visual impacts on the wider countryside will be limited by the extent of the ridge and the height of the land.

The generally wooded nature of the area and the strong planting along the northern boundary are helpful in restricting long distance views towards the site. We are confident that land at North Witney could be developed without causing visual or physical coalescence with Hailey, or detrimental landscape impact from views from elsewhere.

The North Witney site has much greater visual containment than much of the land on the outskirts of the town



Masterplan

A Masterplan has been prepared for the site in order to demonstrate how we consider land at North Witney could be developed. This has been revisited since the promotion of the site through the last Local Plan and site constraints and opportunities have been re-assessed in line with recently published Government Guidance and a changed set of design principles, with sustainable development as a priority.

The Masterplan recognises the importance of the setting, with the link road running through the site responding to the topography of the site and landscape features within. The design also places increased importance on the retention of hedgerows and features of ecological importance, as well as ensuring that the road running through the site creates a pedestrian friendly internal street, rather than a car

orientated route. The Masterplan provides an indication of how these key principles can be achieved on the site. The main elements of the Masterplan are:

- The creation of a high quality integrated urban extension to Witney providing a compact, yet sensitive residential development, making the most efficient use of the land.
- The provision of up to around 1,400 dwellings, including a significant proportion of affordable housing, all designed to meet energy standards required through Government Guidance.
- Enhanced tree planting along the boundaries provides a new wooded edge to Witney reflecting local settlement patterns, with possible future woodland provision in the fields beyond.

Indicative Phase 1: 200 dwellings (approx)



Indicative Phase 2: 500 dwellings (approx)



- A clear street network creating a legible urban environment. Clearly defined street characteristics include the provision of a main street incorporating the bus route through the development with a loop around the paddock linking a series of public spaces.
- All the new homes to be within a 400m radius (five minutes walk) of a bus stop.
- The paddock setting is enhanced to accommodate informal recreation spaces and attenuation measures as part of a sustainable drainage system. This area, together with adjoining small wooded areas and existing footpaths become wide landscape corridors or “green corridors” providing pedestrian and cycle ways to the open countryside beyond.
- Well overlooked Public Open Space providing protection and an enhanced setting for existing hedgerows and water courses, focused around the centre of the development with almost 9 hectares of formal recreation space and a further 9 hectares of strategic landscaping, primarily along the northern boundary, creating the opportunity for trim trails and other healthy living pursuits.
- Potential for a new primary school and community facilities on a 2.2 hectare level site. As a focus for the community this could include leisure facilities, multi-use games area or sports pitches.
- The provision of flexible mixed use units providing space for shops or other local facilities located on the main street with easy access from all new and neighbouring residents.

Indicative Phase 3: 700 dwellings (approx)



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Why Should North Witney be the Preferred Growth Option?

Land at North Witney offers a highly sustainable option for the growth of the town that can be seamlessly integrated with the existing settlement in order to create a mixed, balanced and sustainable community.

The development of land at North Witney also has the ability to deliver the West End Link, which would create great transport improvements to Witney town centre not only by providing an additional vehicular link over the river, but also through the delivery of public transport improvements. This in turn will enhance the public realm and environment by improving air quality and removing congestion from the town centre.

The development would also have the potential to reduce flooding problems within Witney, by creating a sustainable drainage system which would reduce the risk of flooding further down stream, in particular at Hailey Road.

The North Witney Consortium truly believes that the North Witney site offers great potential to deliver a sustainable development for Witney, and that the overall package offered by the North Witney development could deliver significant benefits to the town that far exceed those offered by any of the competing sites. Benefits that not only provide much needed and required market and affordable housing, but also deliver improvements to the general operation of the town creating a safer and less congested town for everyone to enjoy.

Contacts

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